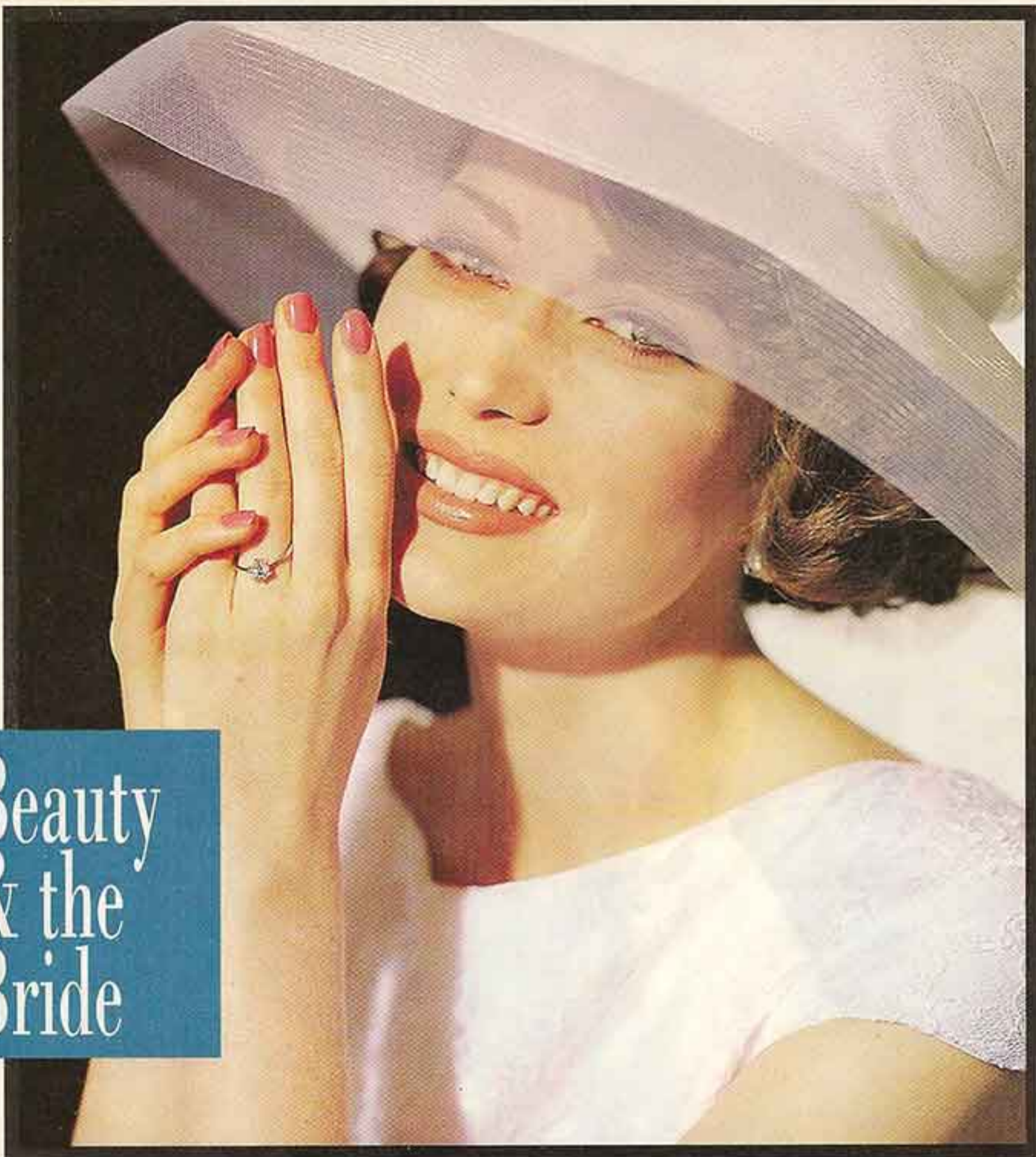


Beauty & the Bride



When it comes to choosing a shade of nail enamel for your big day, an understated, elegant hue is always a sure winner. Most experts agree that your wedding is not the time to experiment with neon color or nail jewels. **LEFT:** All makeup by Prescriptives. Featuring Cutex Color Quick Mauve In Motion Nail Enamel and Fast For All top coat. Gown by Vivian Dessy Diamond for Dessy Creations. Hat by Whittal & Shon. Earrings by Charles Marchant. Engagement ring by H. Stern.

A Show of Hands

Make sure your hands stand up to the scrutiny of ring-admiring well-wishers.

Your hands and nails take center stage when you're the bride. Friends and family may take your hand in their own to admire your engagement ring or new wedding band. Certainly your nails should enhance the beauty of your rings and not detract from them.

Here, trends, tips, and how-tos for a perfect 10 from this day forward.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

For the past few years, the French manicure has been very popular with brides. In fact, some brides wouldn't think of walking down the aisle without hav-

ing their nails trimmed with white polish and topped with a sheer beige or pink enamel. On the other hand, there are some brides who feel that the French manicure has become passé and long for something a little different. The good news is that there are several beautiful manicure options to choose from.

Jonice Padilha, manicurist at the J Sisters salon in New York City, says, a newer, more modern approach to the French manicure is to skip the white polished tips and apply a coat of sheer cream polish on top of a shimmery enamel. Coordinating lacquers to try,

New York Cosmetics New York Nude #2 and #14 (ivory) or #4 and #5 (pink). (To order, call 800-537-5301.) Padilha says, "The result is a subtle glow that makes your hands look unique, special...just the way you want to feel on your wedding day."

Another twist on the traditional French manicure comes from Jessica Vartoughian, founder of the Jessica Nail Clinic in Beverly Hills, where celebrities like Julia Roberts and Morgan Fairchild go to have their nails done. Var-

BY DOROTHY GRAY MANDRAKOS

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A Show of Hands

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toughian suggests substituting a pearly white polish (like Estée Lauder Whisper Perfect Finish Nail Lacquer) on the tips of nails instead of the standard bright white. The look is softer, more romantic, and less obvious.

THE COLOR CLUB

If French manicures are not your style, give some of the new sheer polishes a try. Pretty pale hues always complement bridal attire. Shades to look for: L'Oréal Mandarine Colour Riche Nail Enamel, Sally Hansen Shimmer Blush New Lengths, Ultima II Light Pink Nail Color, and Revlon Naked Ivory Creme Sheer Nail Enamel. Of course, if you're looking for something more daring and dramatic, Elisa Ferri, a consultant to Cutex, believes in trusting your instincts and following your own personal taste. She says, "Red lipstick and red roses accompanied by short red nails can make a stunning statement." Popular "I-do" reds this season include Paloma Picasso Mon Rouge Nail Enamel, Jessica Scarlet Nail Enamel, and Avon Flirty Rose Color Last Plus Nail Enamel.

THE PERFECT MANICURE

What's the best way to make sure you have beautiful nails on your wedding day? "Start having professional manicures about six weeks before your wedding day," says nail pro Sheril Bailey, the creator of Madonna's manicure and fountain-pen-like nail in her "Erotica" video. If that's too costly for you, Ferri suggests having just one professional manicure about two months ahead of time, and paying close attention to what the manicurist does. Then start practicing at home each week. "There's no reason you can't give yourself a manicure if you know what you're doing," says Ferri.

FAKING IT

In the event that a nail breaks, or worse yet, you bite them all off, don't panic. A professional manicurist can apply tips over your nails or wrap a chipped nail with silk or linen to protect it. If you are considering a full set of tips, Bailey suggests having them

applied a few weeks in advance. This way you can decide on the appropriate length and make sure you don't have an allergic reaction to the artificial nails. Most manicurists agree tips should not be left on longer than one or two months at a time.

THE HEALTHY NAIL

Thanks to many new treatment products, having healthy, longer nails has never been easier. For dry, rough cuticles opt for Sally Hansen Problem Cuticle Remover, it contains healing properties from the aloe vera plant. To strengthen weak nails, try Barielle Clearly Noticeable Nail Thickener, it



does the trick. Keeping hands and nails hydrated helps diminish the chances of breaks, chips, and cracks, and helps minimize the appearance of fine lines. Two great tries: Vaseline Intensive Care Hand & Nail Formula Lotion and Christian Dior Capture for Hands.

GOING TO GREAT LENGTHS?

How long should you let your fingernails grow for your once-in-a-lifetime event? The pros insist just over the edge of the fingertips is long enough. The general consensus is that very long nails look outdated.

When it comes to shape, experts say, echo the shape at the bottom of your nail bed. Nails should look natural.

Having a perfect 10 does require time and patience, but the pay-off is well worth it, especially when you're the bride. ♥